

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (SWRTPO)

COWLITZ-WAHKIAKUM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (CWCOG)

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) is a five-county area that includes Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, and Wahkiakum Counties. The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the area consisting of the Longview-Kelso, WA – Rainier, OR urban area. All other portions of the five counties not served by the MPO are part of the RTPO.

The SWRTPO area encompasses a large and geographically diverse region ranging from the crest of the Cascade Mountains west to Pacific beaches and from immediately north of the Vancouver metropolitan area to just south of Olympia. The Kelso-Longview and Aberdeen-Hoquiam areas support active deep-draft ports and major employers in paper, timber, steel, aluminum and regional medical facilities. Much of the region's 8,064 square miles is mountainous and relatively unpopulated. Most communities are located along the primary transportation corridors – Interstate 5, the coastline and coastal harbors, and the lower Columbia River. Mount St. Helens stands out as the most well-known landmark in the region, attracting tens of thousands of visitors every year.



Mt. St. Helens

Major Transportation Facilities:

The SWRTPO region's major transportation facilities connect a diverse geography — the Pacific Coast, the Columbia River Valley, and the counties along I-5 between the Coast and Cascade mountain ranges. The I-5 corridor and the BNSF/Amtrak rail lines run north and south through Cowlitz and Lewis Counties. Other critical facilities include the Columbia River marine highway, the US 101 Coastal Corridor, three state highways that connect the coastal counties to I-5 (SR 4, SR 6 & US 12), and four public transit systems. US 12 also connects across the Cascade Mountains to Eastern Washington.



Port of Grays Harbor

Demographics:

The population for the five-county area was 253,550 in 2000. This represents more than 4 percent of the state population. Cowlitz County has the largest population, 92,948 — almost 37 percent of the region. Pacific County's population of 65 years and older is 22.6 percent of its total population compared to the state percentage of 11.2 percent.

	Population (2000)	Persons Per Square Mile	Median Household Income (1997)
Washington State:	5,894,121	88.6	\$41,715
Cowlitz County:	92,948	81.6	\$37,189
Grays Harbor County:	67,194	35.1	\$31,091
Lewis County:	68,600	28.5	\$32,557
Pacific County:	20,984	22.5	\$28,131
Wahkiakum County:	3,824	14.5	\$35,446

SWRTPO Freight Facts:

- The bulk of the freight truck trips originating from this region have destinations in Western Washington.
- Aberdeen is one of the largest generators of freight truck traffic within the CWCOG.
- Longview is one of the most frequent destinations of freight truck traffic within the CWCOG.

Eastern Washington Intermodal Transportation Study November 1995

Freight Movement:

The majority of truck trips support the area's timber-based economy and the needs of the local population. Most of these counties are heavily dependent on the wood and paper products industry. Grays Harbor County also relies on the seafood industry and Lewis County bases some of its economy on solid waste processing. The types of freight that travel by rail through this region are: express intermodal trailers and containers, grain, manufactured goods and merchandise, and coiled steel.

Economic Trends:

Southwest Washington's economy is highly dependent on its transportation system. The region plays a significant role in interstate and international transportation with its many land and marine ports. Like much of Western Washington, economic diversification is a fundamental goal with the transition from a resource-based economy. Manufacturing continues to be a strong sector, especially in Cowlitz and Lewis counties. All along the I-5 corridor and in Grays Harbor County, several thousands of acres of industrial land are available for development. Lingering high unemployment rates persist, although the timber and seafood industries are still an important part of the region's economic base. Expansion of rural tourism is critical to the coastal counties, which are recovering more slowly from the economic changes that have taken place. The Satsop Development Park in Grays Harbor County is an example of current efforts to introduce new industries such as telecommunications and energy technologies.

SWRTPO Transportation Facts:

- Between 1970 and 1997 population grew 31%, while registered vehicles increased 84%.
- The I-5 corridor through Lewis County has an average daily traffic count of 48,000, 16% of that daily traffic is trucks.
- The intersection serving the Longview/Kelso industrial area, — SR 432 and SR 433, the Lewis and Clark Bridge — has the second highest freight traffic in the state.
- Grays Harbor Transit Authority currently has plans to implement a vanpool program to the new correctional facility in the county.

Railroad lines serving this region are: Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Lewis and Clark. Amtrak provides passenger rail service.

Members: Counties: Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific and Wahkiakum;

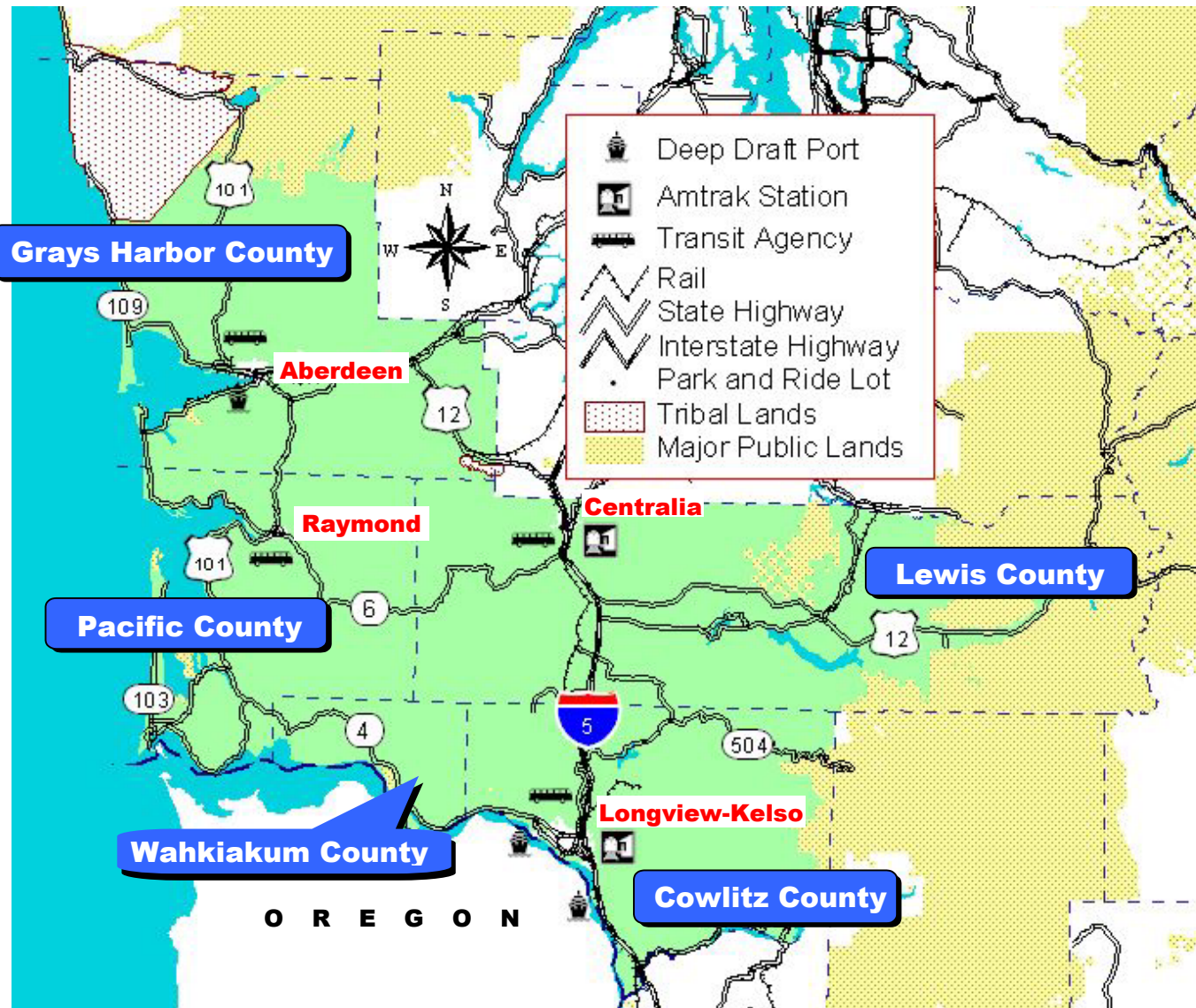
Cities: Aberdeen, Castle Rock, Cathlamet, Centralia, Chehalis, Cosmopolis, Elma, Hoquiam, Ilwaco, Kalama, Kelso, Long Beach, Longview, McCleary, Montesano, Morton, Mossyrock, Napavine, Oakville, Ocean Shores, Pe Ell, Raymond, South Bend, Toledo, Westport, Winlock, Woodland and Vader;

Transit Agencies: Grays Harbor Transit Authority, Pacific Transit System, Twin Transit, and Cowlitz Transit Authority;

Ports: Centralia, Chehalis, Chinook, Grays Harbor, Ilwaco, Kalama, Longview, Peninsula, Willapa Harbor, Wahkiakum Districts 1 & 2 and Woodland;

Tribal Nations: Chehalis, Quinault, and Shoalwater Bay;

State Agency: WSDOT



Transportation Priorities:

Congestion Management on I-5 Corridor:

Interstate 5's existing two-lane alignment in each direction creates some bottlenecks, especially through the Chehalis and Centralia urban areas. Adding capacity to the I-5 corridor from North Cowlitz County through Lewis County is the number one priority for the SWRTPO. Improvements to I-5 in Lewis County require continued support for the development of flood control measures in the Chehalis River basin to protect the interstate and rail corridors.



I-5 between Chehalis and Centralia

Interstate 5 corridor capacity projects identified in the Regional Transportation Plan include:

<i>SWRTPO Needs</i>	
<i>Congestion Management projects:</i>	
<i>State Highways</i>	<i>\$1,995.0 million</i>
<i>Amtrak Cascades</i>	<i>\$378.9 million</i>

- Addition of a third travel lane in each direction to alleviate congestion, enhance safety, and create route continuity through the entire region.
- Potential arterial street improvements in Chehalis and Centralia to reduce short distance local trips on I-5.
- Implement flood control measures in the Chehalis River basin to prevent flood impacts on mainline interstate and rail facilities.

Freight Movement: The region's ports play an important role in interstate and international freight movement, by truck, rail and ship. Several high priority projects are being developed to ensure the ability to keep up with the demand to move goods through the region and the state. The Columbia River Channel Deepening will allow for larger container ships to access Lower Columbia River ports, increasing the capacity to seamlessly transfer bulk commodities from rail to ship and vice versa. Major capacity expansion projects for the Kelso-Longview industrial corridor have been identified in the SR 432 Route Development Plan. The mainline BNSF railroad is an essential transportation facility that requires significant capacity expansion in order to move increasing train traffic and, where possible, to separate passenger from freight rail.

Examples of regionally significant freight mobility projects:

- Columbia River channel deepening.
- SR 432 industrial bypass Route Development Plan.
- Load transfer facilities and new spur and loop tracks at the Port of Grays Harbor.

<i>SWRTPO Needs</i>	
<i>Freight Movement projects:</i>	
<i>State Highways</i>	<i>\$275.3 million</i>
<i>Aviation</i>	<i>\$5.7 million</i>
<i>Marine Ports</i>	<i>\$210.7 million</i>

Economic Development and Rural Mobility:

The region depends on the state highway system for strengthening and diversifying the economy, especially in the rural and coastal areas.

Tourism is a fundamental component of the overall strategy. Tourists, local residents, and a high proportion of trucks all compete for space on the scenic rural highways. Preserving and improving these corridors is crucial to sustain the rural economy.

Examples of economic development & rural mobility projects:

- Construct passing and truck climbing lanes on rural routes (SR 4, SR 6, US 12, US 101, SR 105, SR 107 & SR 109).
- Improvements to facilities on SR 4 to accommodate visitors for the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commemoration - Grays Harbor (Westport to Ocean Shores) vehicular ferry.
- Replacement of US 101/Hoquiam bridge.
- Completion of SR 109 from Taholah to Queets.



SR 101 at Station Camp - Lewis & Clark Site



Raymond - South Bend Trail

Transit and Non-motorized Transportation: The SWRTPO region supports continued development of rural public transportation and other regional facilities that will improve bicycling and walking. Multi-use pathways are becoming an important facet of local tourism development efforts.

Examples of projects to improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation are:

- Increased funding for transit linkages between existing urban systems.
- Grade separated intersections of community roadways and the BNSF/Amtrak rail corridor.
- Completion of the Cross-State Rail Trail between Chehalis and Raymond.
- Completion of the Discovery Trail multi-use pathway from Long Beach through Ilwaco east to Fort Columbia State Park.

<i>SWRTPO Needs</i>	
<i>Congestion Management projects:</i>	
<i>State-Interest Facilities:</i>	
<i>Aviation</i>	<i>\$0.3 million</i>
<i>Transit</i>	<i>\$35.3 million</i>
<i>Ferry</i>	<i>\$3.1 million</i>